

LOSS OF LIEUT. STRAIN AND PARTY.
THE ROUTE IMPRACTICABLE.
NEEDS OF A MEMBER OF THE EXPEDITION

To the Editor of The N. Y. Tribune.

SIR: As much anxiety of felt with regard to the Darien Expedition, and for the safety of Lieut. Strain and his party, I feel called upon to make a general statement of what has

The facts connected with the dispatch of the party are well known—the story of Dr Culen, the sending of Mr. Gibbott to verify it, his official report with its maps, and the subsequent action of the Admiralty, all showing the promptness of the Government in dealing with the matter.

plans, profits and estimates. In putting into perspective the line of communication across the Isthmus of Darien in the most favorable light. The highly respectable character of Mr Gibbons's constituents caused the public to overlook certain assumptions in his statements, and though it was evident that his estimates were incorrect, yet it was impossible to wholly rebuke an honorable and when

Government in its character of protector of the Isthmus and patron of inter-oceanic communication was approached by an agent of the company, there was no hesitation in extending the cruise of the Cyane to Caledonia Bay, and in placing a small appropriation in the hands of the local authorities for the maintenance of the

proposed route. Little difficulty was anticipated, and the resources of a man of war were supposed to be nearly sufficient for the survey. It can hardly be believed that nearly all the representations with regard to the Isthmus by the canal projectors have been proved false; that the main features of the country were totally misrepresented; and that

The Cyane touched first at Carthagena for information with regard to the Ishmians, and to secure the cooperation of the Government of New Granada. While there intelli-

gence was received that a British and a French man of war had been detailed for the same service, and that the *Cyane* was expected to join them. Her instructions took no cognizance of this, and after waiting ten days for Col. Codrington, Superintendent of the General Survey of New Granada, she sailed for Colonias Bay, where she arrived Jan. 17.

Little information had been obtained at Carthagena, but that little was unfavorable. Two gentlemen had been sent by the Governor to see the Indians and prepare the way for the survey.

and rocky islands. The western entrance is shallow and exposed; the eastern, though narrow, carries abundant depth of water. A complete chart of this bay has been made by the Cynae officers. The general aspect of the country from the water is most unpropitious: ranges of hill above hill rise back to a lofty chain of mountains all

Immediately upon the arrival of the ship, the Indians from the neighboring villages came on board and requested that no one should land until the chiefs had been consulted. Several of them speak imperfect English, picked up among the coast traders. Next day a grand council was

held on board the Cyane. The principal men of the country, for thirty miles up and down, assisted. They showed, as we had expected, great jealousy of any attempt to enter their territory. They represented the hills and forests as barriers placed by the Almighty against any canal; they sneered at the dancers from wild beasts, from swamps and

forests. At last, full permission was given to traverse peacefully the country, and this was confirmed some days afterward by an envoy from the head of the nation at Mandingo Bay. These Indians are a diminutive but active race, skilled in the use of firearms and the bow and arrow. They cultivate the reeds to a considerable extent, the pro-

Capt. Hollins took all possible precautions against hostility on the part of the Indians, and there has never been reason to suspect them of treachery. At this time we were not informed of the murder of Capt. Provost's men; afterwards, when the natives were charged with it, they said that

the people of the interior seeing these intruders, treated them as enemies, as they had entered the country without permission. I merely mention this to show that they pretended at least, to consider their permission as a guarantee against attack.

The mouth of the Caledonia River, whose course the pro-

posed canal route follows, is not accessible on account of heavy surf; the only safe landing is about two miles and a half distant, in shallow water. The action of the waves has raised a dyke at the mouth of the River, forming a deep pool above; the water flows rapidly over the dyke about 10 feet wide and waist deep. The other streams flowing into

the bay are much smaller. A mile above its mouth the Caledonia becomes a shallow rapid stream, running over a pebbly bottom. When Mr. Gisborne went up with his party, he pointed out the point where the Indians turned him back on his previous trip, about three miles from the beach.

Our course along this stream, sometimes wading in its bed, sometimes wading in its bed, sometimes eating in the thick jungle on its banks. Six miles up by the windings of the stream, about four in a straight line, the river divides; both its branches have been traced up and found to have their sources 1,400 to 2,000 feet high in the Cordillera. The descent of the River on to this

The party which left the Cyane, consisted of twenty-seven persons. Lieut. Strain, Messrs. Pruxton, Maury and Gardiner, of the Navy; Dr. Bird, Messrs. Boggs, Kettlewell, Mayo and Hollins, of the Survey; Lieutenants Casilla and DeLong, detached by the Governor of Carthagenia. Messrs.

Holcomb and Avery. Volunteers at Carthage, and myself, with thirteen picked men from the Cyane. Every man carried his own provisions for ten days, blanket, arms, ammunition, &c. The object was to make a run across the country, determine its general character, and return for the regular army. Had Lieut. Strain anticipated the kind of work

we found, his preparations would have been different. Mr. Guberne's official report led him to expect a plain country divided by a ridge of hills 150 feet in height, and on the other side of this the valley of the River Lavana flowing directly to the Pacific.

third day, and having already attained an elevation of about 200 feet we came to a gorge in the mountain where the porphyritic rocks precipitous on each side, formed a pool in the stream, too deep to pass without wetting everything. The order was given by Lieut. Strain to pass over the slope above this gorge and rejoin the river beyond. We clam-

bered up and in about twenty minutes five of the party found their way separately into the bed of the stream above. It was a bad bit of hill, covered with a tangled tropical forest growth. After waiting a sufficient time, it was supposed that the remainder of the party had, in pursuance of the order, reached the stream higher up, and we proceeded

slowly along firing shots, as concerted; we heard shots in answer apparently above and confirmed in our previous belief, continued on leaving notes of progress. We encamped that night on a few square feet of rock, having reached an elevation of about 700 feet in the midst of impracticable mountains, the stream a more torrent falling in successive

The next morning we cut to the top of a hill 800 or 1,000 feet above us, (1,500 above the sea.) nothing was to be seen except an unbroken mass of densely wooded mountains. As we had no compass, progress was impossible in the woods; we returned, and finding no traces of the party

made our way to the ship for a new attempt. We were still on the Atlantic side of the Cordillera. No anxiety was felt for the main body; our party consisted of Messrs. Holcomb, Bird, Hollins, (son of the Captain of the *Cyane*) myself and one of the crew. Mr. Holcomb, an engineer of experience in South America and the Isthmus, and myself,

During our absence the British brig *Espiegle*, schooner *Scorpion*, and the French steamer *Chimere*, had arrived and landed a joint party of sixty under guidance of Mr. Gilborne. I anticipate to say that they returned after a

fortnight entirely baffled; they had found the same range of lofty mountains everywhere. Mr. Giesbrecht said that he had been entirely mistaken. Dr. Cullen was of the same party. There was but one opinion with regard to those persons; the representations of both were proved totally false.

Two parties were now dispatched from the Cynos; one to examine still further the mountain to the eastward, the other, consisting of those separated from Mr. Strain, with a reinforcement, was to join him if possible, if not, to continue the exploration of the interior. The first party returned after a few days, having reached the summits of the

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